



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Monday, Jan. 18, 2016

Contact: Fire Chief Reece Bertholf, 843-525-7055

Restaurant fire prompts Beaufort-Port Royal firefighters to offer special safety training

A recent early-morning fire at a Shell Point fast food restaurant is prompting Beaufort-Port Royal fire officials to offer special safety training for restaurants and commercial kitchens.

On Jan. 2 around 5 a.m., firefighters arrived at the McDonald's restaurant at 850 Parris Island Gateway. Employees apparently had just turned on the restaurant's deep fryer cooking system when the fire started.

Firefighters from Beaufort-Port Royal, Parris Island Fire Department and the Burton Fire District found smoke coming from the restaurant's roof and flames enveloping the fryer area. Heavy smoke filled the building, limiting visibility.

Using dry chemical fire extinguishers and a water hose, firefighters were able to quickly extinguish the fire but not before it damaged the restaurant. No one was injured, Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Chief Reece Bertholf said.

The challenge at this fire and at others in commercial establishments -- especially fast food restaurants where there's a frequent staff turnover -- is ensuring that every employee, both new and tenured, are trained in how to respond to fires, Bertholf said.

"Just as we advise all home and apartment residents to have a fire escape plan, it is especially important for all of our businesses to have a plan," Bertholf said. "For restaurants, that includes training on how to shut down the kitchen equipment and get everybody out quickly."

Bertholf, Public Education Officer Capt. John Robinson and Fire Marshal Capt. Tim Ogden offer these tips:

1. Constantly monitor and use commercial kitchen equipment as designed and according to manufacturer's specifications. Keep every aspect of the equipment clean, maintained and in good working condition
2. Repetitively train all employees on what to do in the event of a fire. Include their personal safety first and make sure they are aware of all fire suppression systems available to them in a commercial kitchen. This takes practice, just like fire drills in school.
3. Use of K-Class hand held extinguishers, typically in silver extinguisher cans labeled K-Class in commercial kitchens, can immediately put out a grease fire that has just started -- if used properly.

A K-Class extinguisher works by knocking down the flames first. Then, a chemical mixture created by the K-Class extinguisher mixes with the grease and creates a foamy layer. Basically, the super-heated grease is feeding the fire; until the grease is cooled and the oxygen cut off, the fire will continue. A K-Class extinguisher takes care of this.

In using fire extinguishers, Beaufort-Port Royal firefighters teach the PASS method:

- **P**ull (pull the pin on the extinguisher)
- **A**im (aim at the base of the fire)
- **S**queeze (squeeze the extinguisher handle)
- **S**weep (sweep the nozzle across the base of the fire)

Splashing hot grease can burn so the user needs to stand a safe distance back.

4. Evacuate everyone from the structure in the event of any fire. On the way out, someone should pull the appropriate handle for the hood-mounted fire suppression system and then call 911 once everyone is safely outside. These pulls are typically located along the way out of the building. Each restaurant should have one or more people designated to pull the fire suppression emergency handle on the way out.
5. Most importantly, never go back inside a structure that is on fire!

Any business interested in help with a fire safety plan or training should call Capt. John Robinson or Fire Marshal Capt. Tim Ogden at 843-525-7055.

END